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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COTONOU 000120

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PD (ANYASO, TITUS, LISEBY), AF/W (ACOOK)  
DEPT PASS TO PEACE CORPS  
DOJ FOR ICITAP and OPDAT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: HOMAGE TO LATE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER CATHERINE  
PUZEY

REFERENCES: Cotonou

¶1. Summary: The local media reported on the memorial ceremony held at the Chief of Mission's Residence on March 25. The ceremony was held in memory of the late Catherine Puzey, a Peace Corps Volunteer who was killed at her residence in the village of Badjoude, located in the Atacora department of northern Benin. In attendance were Mission personnel, including American officials and LES from the State Department, USAID, Peace Corps and MCA, along with a large Beninese government delegation made up of three Ministers and President Boni Yayi's Director of Cabinet, as well as a delegation led by the king of Badjoude. End summary.

¶2. On March 27, the right-of-center Cotonou-based independent daily "Le Fleuron," which is closely associated with the President's Office, carried a whole edition of stories and photos reporting on the March 25 memorial service held at the residence of Ambassador Gayleatha B. Brown in memory of the late Catherine Puzey, a Peace Corps Volunteer killed on March 12 in her residence. After mentioning the vile manner in which Ms. Catherine Puzey was murdered, the article states that President Boni Yayi's Chief of Cabinet, visibly moved during the ceremony, assured the victim's family and all Mission personnel of the government's full support in prosecuting the perpetrators of this crime and promised, on behalf of President Boni Yayi, that this case will be fully investigated and that all those who contributed to the killing of Catherine Puzey will be brought to justice.

¶3. "Le Fleuron" also published Ambassador Gayleatha B. Brown's opening remarks. Following are translated excerpts from Ambassador Brown's remarks, which were given in French: "On behalf of the government of the United States, the American people and the personnel of the U.S. Diplomatic Mission in Benin, and on my own behalf, I would like to thank you for honoring Catherine Puzey's memory by your presence at this memorial service..." ... "During the 18 months prior to her assassination, Catherine Puzey worked ardently and with devotion to serve the students of Dompago Secondary School from her village of Badjoude where she died. Ms. Catherine Puzey was an exemplary Peace Corps Volunteer who cared so much for her work, the people of her adopted village and her friends. Her senseless and vicious killing is upsetting to anyone who cares for life, liberty and women's rights. In this regard, I would like to thank the government and the people of Benin, and the officials from the French Embassy who shared our sorrow, and assisted us in the investigation of her killing. The members of her family in the United States of America, the U.S. government, the representatives of the U.S. government in Benin, her friends and colleagues request that investigations be conducted and that justice be done."

¶4. "Le Fleuron" also carried a separate editorial titled "The Martyr is Dead and Her Projects Shattered" in which the author postulates that the victim was only 24 and was pursuing many ongoing projects. The author of the editorial pursued his analysis with the following comments: "In May 2009, she was to terminate her service and return to the United States to pursue her higher

studies, work for a non-government organization and travel across Africa." ... "When people are defenseless or oppressed, Catherine does not hesitate to assist, recounted her mother."... "She likes to see justice done."... "And in order to make justice prevail, investigations must reveal the circumstances of her death." ... "The preliminary investigations revealed that Catherine was neither raped nor robbed."... "The government promised to cooperate fully in investigating the conditions in which she was killed." ... "The government expressed its condolences to the parents of the victim." ... "On March 20, a memorial church service was held in Alpharette, Georgia, at the Methodist Church of Birmingham."... The 99 other Peace Corps Volunteers still serving in Benin do not fear for their life because the Worldwide Peace Corps Director assured them of his support.

15. Also on March 27, the left-of-center independent daily, Le Matinal, carried an article titled "Two weeks after her assassination, Catherine Puzey receives homage worthy of her rank." The article mentions that a memorial ceremony was held at the residence of the Ambassador of the United States, to honor the memory of Catherine Puzey, a Peace Corps Volunteer assassinated in her residence at Badjoude. The author of the article pursued his story with the following comments:  
"The ceremony that took place on March 25 was attended by Mission Officials and local staff, a strong government delegation and a royal delegation led by the king of Badjoude." "Ambassador Brown thanked the government and the people of Benin, as well as the French Embassy to Benin, for their support."... "On behalf of the government of the United States, the family and friends of the victim, Ambassador Brown requested that investigations be conducted in a professional manner in order to bring the criminals to justice." The author of the article quoted the Director of the

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Secondary School where Ms Catherine teaches as saying: "Good men don't last."... "Catherine's short life among us was full of kindness."... "Let's pray for her."

Brown